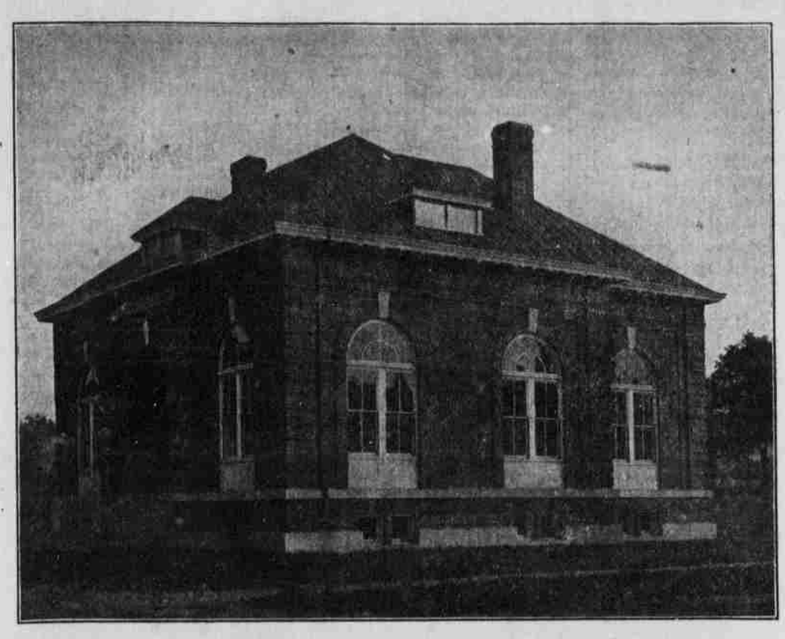
COBLEIGH PUBLIC LIBRARY.

The Dedication at Lyndonville Saturday Afternoon.



The dedication of the Cobleigh Public Library was held in Music Hall, Lyndonville, Saturday afternoon, followed by a reception in the library building. Music Hall was fairly well filled at 2 o'clock and Dr. J. W. Copeland presided on this occasion. On the platform with the donor, Eber W. Cobleigh, and the speakers were the local clergy, officers of the Woman's Club, members of the building committee and the library board and Mrs. Walter P. Smith of St. Johnsbury, representing the Vermont Free Public Library Commission.

After the invocation by Rev. William Shaw and a piano solo by Mrs. Charles G. Norris, the following presentation address was read by Rev. I. W. McLaughlin, Mr. Cobleigh not feeling able to address the assembly.

Having the interest of the town of Lyndon at heart, I wished to do something for its benefit, and am glad to know that the library building is appreciated and will be a benefit to the town. You all know that Lyndonville is recognized as one of the leading villages of northern New England, having among other things a Village Improvement Society second to none. I am glad the ladies are interested in the library and know they will carry out their plans all right for the good of the town. I hope that all who visit the library will feel that it is to be a place for study and pleasure and that much good will come from it in days to come. Hoping it will be received in the same spirit that it is given, I will close, hoping that all will enjoy themselves when there.

I still remain, yours for all that is good.

E. W. COBLEIGH.

The address of acceptance was given by Mrs. E. J. Blodgett who said,

In accepting this beautiful gift on behalf of the town of Lyndon, today, the first fact which impresses itself strongly upon me is the inadequacy of the English language to express the emotions of the mind. To those who have hoped and toiled and sacrificed to this end, it seems meager indeed to say merely that this occasion marks the culmination of years of hope and toil and sacrifice, and yet, had I a thousand tongues and a throat of brass, words could express no more. We who have nursed and watched over our library from its feeble infancy, through the vicissitudes of childhood, until its blossoming into this noble maturity, feel that words, mere words, but feebly express our delight at this consummation of our endeavors. Words, mere words, cannot begin to show our gratitude to our generous townsman for this superb gift of a beautiful building which now crowns our labors. We thank you, Mr. Cobleigh, for this munificent gift, and will try and show our appreciation and gratitude, not only by words, but by the fostering care we give this institution, the interest we take in it, and the value and help we get from it. And our gratitude is due, not only to Mr. Cobleigh, but to all who have so generously assisted in the upbuilding of this library. We thank Mr. Vail, whose aid, both financial and artistic, has been of so great value to us; we thank you, Mrs. Finney, as representative of the Woman's Club, whose self-denial and energy both gave the needed impetus to the movement for a library building, and helped to embellish it complete. We thank all the men and women who have helped toward this end. We are all partakers in today's triumph, not one but has given according to his ability. I cannot name all the living men and women who have helped, but I want to pay one word of tribute to the memory of our esteemed friend, Isaac Sanborn, who gave to this end according to his means, and would so rejoice today if he could see the accomplishment of his wishes.

Our library is unique in that it has been gradually built up from a small beginning, here a little and there a little, and is thus pre-eminently a library of the people, the result of their work and endeavor. Starting in 1896 with the gift of a hundred books from the state of Vermont, it has grown slowly but surely until it now numbers over 3000 volumes. A few of these books are gifts, but the great majority have been purchased year by year from the appropriation of the town itself. But as a noble soul is hampered in its efficiency by a crippled or feeble body, so our library has failed of much of its usefulness on account of crowded and inadequate quarters. The wish for a suitable building has been the dream of years, now crystallized into reality. This is not a great achievement, but it means much. It means that faithful and persistent work for better conditions will not go unrewarded and that somehow, sometime, that for which we are fitted will come to us. And it gives us better hope and courage for endeavor along lines of improvement in the future. And after all, it is a great achievement for us, for we are not a wealthy town, nor even an intellectual one. Scholars and college graduates, (the terms are by no means synonymous) are about as plenty among us as hens' teeth. And there is no doubt most of us would prefer a minstrel show to a philosophical lecture any day. In fact, the "man with the hoe" is a far more typical representative than the man with the pen; and yet the men and women who have given their time and service and substance to the formation of this library cannot justly be termed "brothers to the ox."

Now that we have reviewed the past, let us look into the future a little and see what this library shall be to us of permanent value. Until within a few years, perhaps less than a century, you all know that the cult of the scholar was an unshakable institution. A few people monopolized the brains and learning of the world and a few other people the wealth and power, while the great mass of the population, without any of these things, jogged on in ignorance and poverty. Learning was mostly in the hands of monks and priests and the scholar was the man of eminence. With the dawn of the nineteenth century, and the great scientific, industrial and commercial changes that then took place, a new figure appeared upon the scene. No longer the recluse, the scholar and the thinker, but the man of action, the captain of industry, became the man of the hour. Not to think, but to do has become the slogan of the day, and the whole trend of our education, the very curriculum of our schools, shows the effect of the change. Our boys, once exercised in digging Greek roots, now dig potatoes in school gardens, and the most sought after degree, if any college conferred it, would be, not A. M. or L. L. D., but C. H. B., Celebrated Half-Back. Our girls, whose education has always been a puzzling problem, since the days of the oldest daughter of Eve, are now, in the hope of making them more "practical" struggling with scientific cookery, and the composition of infants' foods. Books are out of favor, and their place is taken by the saw and the plane, the broom and the egg beater. Now this is an excellent thing, no doubt, for the Creator intended that man should develop every side of his three fold nature, body, soul, and mind. But let us not forget that the pendulum may swing too far. In the long run the world is going to be ruled by the man who thinks, and manual training and plain sewing alone, will never breed a race of thinkers. We have the spectacle before us today, across the sea, in Russia, of a great and mighty people struggling to rise themselves from the oppression and serfdom of ages. So far their efforts have been futile, not because they have not the power but they do not know how to use that power. They do not know how to think, and they have never had a chance to learn to think. And unless men arise of brains and judgment, men who can think and reason, and lead this heterogeneous mob to some definite end, their struggles will end as they began, in chaos and confusion. Such will be the fate of all democracies, unless the people are taught to think, for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

You may ask, what has all this to do with our library. Much. The aim of education is threefold. To exercise the soul, that is, to be good; to exercise the mind, that is, to be wise; to exercise the body, that is, to be strong. Educative influences are many, the home, the school, the church, the street, each have a part, and among them all, the library has by no means an insignificant one. The librarian, especially in a small town, has a power and influence second to few. For the thinking man is essentially a reading man. Not that the reading man is always a thinking man, for some people can absorb a vast amount of literature without any strain whatever on their mental machinery. But to the thinker, books are the tools of life, and he uses them with skill and discretion. Of some he merely tastes, a flavor being all he requires; some he squeezes like a lemon, and having absorbed all their goodness, throws away the dry and worthless rind; while some few he reads, digests, and assimilates, until they become very brain of his brain, and soul of his soul. For we are the heirs of all the ages, and the well-equipped man of today needs not only that knowledge of past human experience which comes from wide reading; that knowledge of the present which comes from a cultivated observation and receptive mind; and that prophetic insight into the future helped by a trained reason and keen judgment.

Do not be needlessly alarmed lest our library furnish too many stories. Since the beginning of history mankind has craved and called for good stories and no better way has yet been devised of teaching great truths. The Founder of Christianity himself did not disdain a good story, and used them in his sermons almost as frequently as some of his followers. To many a tired man or woman a bright, interesting story is a veritable godsend, and our young people get into much worse mischief than they might by staying at home evenings quietly reading. For, as Holmes says, "The foolishest book is a kind of leaky boat on the sea of wisdom; some of the wisdom will get in anyhow."

Of course we do not intend to have anything but good stories in our library. Sometimes they get in, however, for there are wolves in sheeps' clothing everywhere, you know. But when we find them out, we chuck them into the Atlantic ocean.

And now, just one last charge to you, people of Lyndon. In accepting this library, you have accepted a great responsibility. Take care of it, deserve it, and see that you make of it a means of more liberal culture and better living to every man, woman and child in this town. Let the beautiful Victory, whose graceful figure adds the crowning touch to our building, be emblematic of this institution; with face hidden from all evil, from all obstacles, but with strong pinions outspread, ready to ascend to any desired height of achievement

After a solo by Miss Alice Hutchinson the address of the day was given by Rev. William C. Clark of Lyndon.

Mr. Clark announced that he had chosen as his subject, "Immortal Words," and then said:

The Roman poet, Horace, wrote, "I have built a monument more lasting than brass. * * * Nor shall it pass away with the unnumbered series of ages and the flight of time. I shall not wholly die." His expectation has been fulfilled; his words have lived, and after nineteen centuries hundreds of diligent students are translating them into English.

Men have an instinctive desire to record their thoughts where others can read them.

"Blest be the gracious Power who taught mankind
To stamp a lasting image of the mind."

The speaker then traced the evolution of the library from the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Assyrians and Egyptians to the present day. As civilization advanced the different libraries sprung into existence—first the ecclesiastical library, then the university library, then the national libraries and last of all the proprietary libraries.

A prominent part in the intellectual development of our country has been taken by the proprietary libraries, i. e., libraries owned and controlled by a number of individuals, which are available to the public upon the payment of a fee. A notable example is the Philadelphia library, which was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731. This was before the British Museum was opened to the public, and not a city or town in England at that time possessed a subscription library.

We now come to free public libraries. Some of these have been given by philanthropic men, for example, the library of Cooper Union in New York, named for its esteemed founder, Peter Cooper. Other libraries are supported wholly or in part by taxation.

New Hampshire adopted the first free public library law in America in 1849. Massachusetts followed in 1851. Now 30 states, at least, have such laws, authorizing a town or city to collect taxes for a library. There was nothing of this sort in England until 1850. New Hampshire took a much bolder step in 1895, passing a law which makes it compulsory upon every town to establish and maintain a free public library. The most notable free public library in this country, and with the exception of the library of Congress the largest library in America, is the Boston Public Library, with 734,000 volumes, housed in a magnificent building, with commodious rooms for its patrons, and several branches with delivery offices and reading rooms in different parts of the city.

TRAVELLING LIBRARY.

In 1896 there were about 1200 free public libraries supported by taxation in the United States. In 1897 there were 34 libraries in the United States having 100,000 volumes or more, and 4,026 libraries having over 1000 volumes each, and all together containing 33,000,000 volumes. Not included in these figures are many smaller libraries, and those which have been established in the past few years, of which many have been encouraged by the splendid gifts of Andrew Carnegie.

Turning our attention to the Public Library of Lyndon, we find that its equipment has been derived from four sources: a proprietary library, state aid, local taxation, and gifts.

About forty years ago several of the citizens of the town contributed $5 each for the purchase of a library. This was kept at Lyndon Corner, for the use of the subscribers. It was called the Lyndon Agricultural Library. This contained an encyclopedia, about 50 volumes upon agriculture, and some general literature.

In 1894 the legislature of Vermont enacted a law that any town which had no free public library could receive books from the state to the value of $100, under certain conditions. One of these conditions was that a town of this size must pay $50 a year for the enlargement of the library. In order to take advantage of this act the town of Lyndon in 1895 elected five library trustees, as follows: Walter E. Ranger, Rev. John Nason, B. F. Lincoln, Rev. J. C. Bodwell, and E. M. Campbell. They organized April 22, 1895, electing E. M. Campbell secretary and treasurer. He has filled these offices to the present time, and is the only one of the original trustees now living in town

The library was opened to the public Feb. 29, 1896, having 106 volumes, of which 103 were given by the state. An increase was soon received in the gift of the Lyndon Agricultural Library by its proprietors; this contained 104 volumes.

During the first year the library was kept at the store of Campbell & Blodgett. March 1, 1897, it was removed to the store of Mrs. Duston, who was appointed librarian.

Funds have been received each year from the town treasury; the town voting an appropriation of 2 per cent. of the grand list, in addition to the $50 required by the terms of the law. A substantial gift of $3000 with interest was received from the estate of Isaac Sanborn. After a liberal subscription by citizens, the town voted to pay the balance of $1100 to procure the site for the new building, which is now completed, through the munificent gift of $16,500 from our venerable townsman, Eber Cobleigh. In order that any library may be successfully maintained, a suitable building is necessary. The gift of Mr. Cobleigh has provided for this little library a convenient, durable, and spacious home. Therefore it is very appropriate that it should be known henceforth as the Cobleigh Public Library.

It is fitting at this point to mention the assistance given by the Woman's Club. This excellent organization has accumulated through seven years of patient toil a fund of $800, for the aid of the library, and has devoted a portion of this fund to the furnishing of a natural history room in the new building. In this room the case of mounted birds has great educational value.

In about ten years the library has grown to 3000 volumes, more than 1700 cards have been issued, and the total circulation has been 63,000 volumes. An examination of the catalogue shows that excellent judgment has been used in the selection of the books; and it is particularly gratifying to notice the large proportion of historical books for children and young people.

With the books arranged in this new and beautiful building, the library today ought to enter upon a new era. It is a town library, for the use of all the inhabitants. Vermonters are frugal and canny. Before a man buys a horse he likes to look in its mouth. When a man pays a tax he asks whether he is to receive a return. It may be that there are taxpayers in town who think of this library chiefly as an ornament to the village of Lyndonville, as an expensive luxury to be maintained by the whole town for the benefit of a literary aristocracy. If there are any who question the wisdom of the laws enacted first by New Hampshire and later by Vermont and other states providing for town libraries to be supported by taxation, let them reflect upon the benefits to be derived.

Beginning with the financial consideration, we observe that a wealthy man ready to retire from business, looking about for a place to spend the remainder of his life, will keep an eye out for the public buildings in a town. A man in middle life with money to invest and children to educate will be more likely to settle in a town which has good schools, a public library, and a literary atmosphere. Thus a good library is liable to attract capital to the town.

But looking at a higher motive than the possibility of a financial recompense, it is right that a town should maintain a library for the education of the young. America owes its prosperity very largely to its free school system. The schoolhouse is a necessary institution. Now the library is an important adjunct of the schoolhouse. We have seen that the earliest libraries in our country were connected with colleges in the University of Virginia, Harvard, and Yale. A very large proportion of the libraries now belong to the schools, from the great university library to the score of books in the cupboard of the little red schoolhouse at the fork of the road. A distinguished teacher is reported as saying that nobody reads after the age of twenty. This must have been a hasty utterance, and should not be interpreted literally; but it is true in part. Probably literary tastes are formed before the age of twenty, and the most important reading is done in school days, so that the library is worth more to those who are under twenty than to those who have passed that age. Very likely there are people in this town who will not use the library, but it is proper that they should help to support it for the education of the young, just as it is right to tax people who have no children for the education of their neighbor's children.

In many places a practical connection has been formed between the library and the school, notably in Providence and Worcester. Schools are permitted to draw out books for the scholars to use in connection with their studies, duplicates are provided for use in different schools, and the Superintendent of Schools is ex-officio a member of the board of Library Trustees. This town is not Providence or Worcester. I realize our limitations. Our library is small, but we hope it will be larger, and in its enlargement the interest of the school should have the first thought. It is fortunate that the library is located near the schoolhouse, and it is gratifying to know that it is to be open every day and evening. Now if reference books can be provided to meet the needs of the scholars, if the teachers can refer the pupils to books for supplementary reading, if students can have a preferred claim upon such books at certain periods, these arrangements would add to the usefulness of the library as an annex to the schoolhouse.

But graduation day is not the end of an education; it is Commencement Day. Full grown men and women may continue their education in the library. And those who can never enter college may obtain an education by means of the correspondence school and the reading circle. I have visited the library of Cooper Union on an evening and seen working men diligently studying technical books to perfect themselves in their several crafts. Many libraries have rooms especially arranged for class work. The words of the wise are brought near to the poor man's door. A rich man's son who has distinguished himself as a football player on the college campus, who has acquired an inter-collegiate reputation as a baseball pitcher, may put on a mortar board cap and an Oxford gown and march proudly in the procession of the intellectual aristocracy; but in the stern and closely contested race of life he may find himself distanced by a poor boy who has received his equipment by reading books at his father's fireside.

In 1810 a boy was born in Connecticut named Elihu Burritt. There were ten children in the family. His father died when he was sixteen, and he apprenticed himself to a blacksmith. He had very little schooling in his boyhood, but was an ardent reader, and was able to obtain books from a small village library. He was obliged to work from ten to twelve hours a day at the forge, but while he was blowing the bellows he did sums in his head. Then he studied Greek and Latin with the help of an older brother who had been through college. He studied evenings, but carried his Greek grammar in his hat to the shop, and sometimes while waiting for an iron to heat he would run over the conjugation of a verb. Later he was able to attend school for a short time, but he obtained most of his education by private study. He was known as the "learned blacksmith." He became a great linguist, and an eloquent orator.

In the annals of our nation, there are many stories like this. The greatness of America is due to the fact that she has given to the boy of plebeian birth the opportunity to make himself a man. But even the self-made man must have tools. If all the biographies of successful men could be fully written, we should see how many of them have found their first implements for self improvement in the library of the country town.

Such facts indicate that a library should be maintained not for a few cultured people, but for the common folk. A librarian must study democracy. Often those who come for books will reveal their mental poverty. For example, a patron of a library who wanted "The Stickit Minister," made out the application slip for "The Stuck-up Minister." Another wanted "Something in the way of friction," while another asked for the "Squeal" to a certain book. The library must meet the wants of such people, as well as the Shakespeare Club.

It is important that those who are out of school, on the farm, in the shop, and in the office, may have opportunity to cultivate the acquaintance of the wise who have uttered immortal words. For this is the chief value of books. Occasionally we may enjoy a conversation with a great thinker; but only a few great thinkers are within our reach. Most of them have followed the long trail to "the land of the hereafter." Thanks to the scribe and the printer, we can open a book and let wise men speak to us. A noted minister has said: "Literature is that which brings us into living touch with all the ages, and gives us fellowship with all the best thought and the best birthright that the world has ever had."

Someone has said with profound truth that "the mark of an educated man is the power to see things as they are." Another has said "An educated man must know something of everything and everything of something." For practical success one must be a specialist; he must know "everything of something." But this is not the whole of education. It is not enough to be a master of one subject. The specialist must know his place, or he will be a hobbyist. The man who masters one subject should know where and how that one thing fits in with all the rest.

Hence the great value of general culture. As the dining table is set with a variety of food, so the library should be filled with a diversity of books. The study of history is very important, because the modern world is to learn wisdom from the experience of the past.

Biography is a form of history. A popular preacher says: "These books of life are the wisest books in the libraries. A man is educated just in proportion as he is familiar with the critical hours of earth's greatest men, and the story of their sorrows and how they bore them, of their joys and what inspiration they brought, of their victories and how the hero achieved them. * * * Biographies are the supreme books in literature. They give us the history of the soul."

Fiction has a prominent place, and a legitimate place in literature. A graphic way to write history is to put it in the form of story. In a work of fiction there is excellent opportunity to teach a moral lesson, and to paint in vivid colors a life model. But here a caution should be given. In the field of fiction there is more chaff than in any other. Hence for the product of this field there should be a special fanning mill. Time is the truest sieve. A wise man will not be in haste to read the latest novel. He is too busy to turn the fanning mill. He lets others do the sifting, and awaits their judgment. The fanning mill should be placed at the door of the library. On the book shelves space is reckoned by inches, and there is no room for chaff. The fiction of surest value is found in the works of those masters who have been tested by time. No characters drawn by latest pens will surpass the devout heroism of Jeanie Deans, or the pathetic beauty of Little Nell.

A much neglected department of literature in these days is poetry. The modern libraries have few books of poems, and some of these have leaves uncut. There are no living poets of the first rank. Why? Simply because this busy prosy age is not cultivating poetry. If the fathers do not read poetry, the sons will not write it. This is very unfortunate, for the world needs poets. A city pastor says of poetical works: "These are the books that refine out our grossness, purify our ambitions, kindle the fancy, and breathe upon the soul the delight and perfume of a higher life, bringing men back to that lost Eden and the old Paradise. Blessed are the books that take us back to the days when the world and the heart were young." John Bright, the great English Commoner, was able in his political speeches to quote poetry with telling effect. An English merchant has testified to the importance of cultivating the imagination as a condition of success in politics and commerce.

So we might look through all the subdivisions of literature and find useful food for the mind of man. It is certainly a good work to set before the young and the old, the expert and the novice, the artist and the artisan, the man of today, and the citizen of tomorrow, a carefully assorted treasure of immortal words.

For the ordinary demands of business life, for the sacred responsibilities of citizenship, for the solemn duties of fatherhood and motherhood, we need people who are truly educated, who have the "power to see things as they are." In order that one may be truly beautiful, he must wear upon his brow those graces which are found in the temple of wisdom. In order that one may cheer his fellow men with songs of joy, he must have the hopeful vision which comes from conversation with the seers. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise."

"Speak low! tread softly through these halls;
Here genius lives enshrined;
Here reign in silent majesty
The monarchs of the mind.
A mighty spirit host they come
From every age and clime;
Above the buried wrecks of years
They breast the tide of time.
Here shall the poets chant for thee
Their sweetest loftiest lays,
And prophets wait to guide thy steps
In wisdom's pleasant ways.
Come, with these God-annointed kings
Be thou companion here;
And in the mighty realm of mind
Thou shalt go forth a peer!"

At the conclusion of this address the following telegram was read by the chairman of the meeting:

"Congratulations and best wishes from the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum.

EDWARD T. FAIRBANKS."

The exercises closed with the benediction, pronounced by Rev. E. G. French.

The audience immediately adjourned to the new building where Mr. Cobleigh and the librarian, Mrs. H. Duston, received the visitors, who were delighted with the general appearance of the rooms and the beautiful interior finish.

The building is of brick with cut granite trimmings, plate glass windows and a copper roof. It is considered fire-proof and all the partition walls are of brick, extending from the floor of the basement to the attic. The finish and floors are of quartered oak. The cost of the building and its furnishings was about $16,500. The lot costing $7000 was paid for by subscription, the citizens raising $5900 and the town appropriating the balance. The reading room is furnished with periodicals contributed by individual subscription, and as announced above the Woman's Club furnished the trustees' room and contributed a case of mounted birds. The large cast of "Winged Victory" and the large photographic reproductions of the world's masterpieces were the gift of Hon. T. N. Vail.